

2
ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-8

NEW YORK TIMES
6 JANUARY 1983

Soviet Paper Says U.S. Stirs Talk of Pope Plot

MOSCOW, Jan. 5 (AP) — The Soviet Communist Party newspaper Pravda said today that the Central Intelligence Agency was behind the "utterly absurd" accusations that Bulgarian agents helped arrange the shooting of Pope John Paul II.

The Pravda article was the most authoritative Soviet response yet to Western news accounts suggesting that the Bulgarian secret service, with the knowledge by the K.G.B., the Soviet intelligence agency, was behind the attack on the Pope.

"Only a blind person cannot see the hand of those crusaders from Langley in the present anti-Bulgarian and anti-Soviet slander," Pravda said, alluding to the C.I.A. headquarters in Virginia..

The paper offered no evidence to support its charge.

The daily said five people had backed the alibi of Sergei Ivanov Antonov, the Bulgarian state airline employe jailed in Italy in connection with the case.

The man who shot the Pope, Mehmet Ali Agca, told Italian prosecutors that Mr. Antonov had helped him plan the May 13, 1981, attack and was present in St. Peter's Square when the Pope was shot, according to Italian press accounts. Mr. Antonov denies it.